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Letter dated 1 July 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I am pleased to transmit to you herewith a supplementary report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau of the Economic and Social Council on the work it has carried out since January 2003 (see annex).

Important developments have taken place in the activities of the Advisory Group, including a joint mission to Guinea-Bissau with the Security Council from 26 to 28 June 2003. It is my view that the Economic and Social Council should be informed of these developments and I would be grateful if the attached report could be distributed as a document of the Council, under its agenda item 7 (h), Ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict.

(*Signed*): Dumisani S. **Kumalo**
Chairman of the Ad Hoc Advisory
Group on Guinea-Bissau

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Annex

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE AD HOC ADVISORY GROUP ON GUINEA-BISSAU

Summary

On 10 January 2003, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau presented its first report on the situation in Guinea-Bissau (E/2003/8) to the Economic and Social Council.

Since then, the Advisory Group has remained seized of this matter.

The latest activity of the Advisory Group was a joint mission with the Security Council to Guinea-Bissau, undertaken from 26 to 28 June 2003. The reason for this trip stemmed from the concern expressed by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council (S/2003/621) on the deteriorating situation in the country. The aim of the joint mission was to try to reverse the political decline and to convey an urgent message to the authorities in Guinea-Bissau that they should hold legislative elections as soon as possible and ensure that the electoral process be transparent, open, free and fair.

In Guinea-Bissau, the Group met with President Kumba Yala, the Prime Minister, the Chief of the Armed Forces, Cabinet Ministers, political parties, business leaders, civil society and donors.

The present report covers the activities carried out by the Group since January 2003, including the recent visit to Guinea-Bissau, and contains recommendations for the consideration of the Council.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 25 October 2002, by its decision 2002/304, the Economic and Social Council created an Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau.[1] The Ad Hoc Advisory Group hereby submits to the Council updated information on its work since the presentation of its report of 10 January 2003 (E/2003/8).

II. MAIN ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF THE ADVISORY GROUP SINCE ITS LAST REPORT

2. Since January 2003, the Advisory Group has undertaken wide consultations with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau and their development partners. In these consultations, the Group was joined by Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, President of the Economic and Social Council, and Ambassador Crispin Grey-Johnson, Permanent Representative of the Gambia and Chair of the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau.

3. On 28 January the Group organized a meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Economy and Finance of Guinea-Bissau with donors and the Bretton Woods institutions. The purpose of the meeting was to have a frank exchange of views and to convey a

clear message on the intentions of the Government of Guinea-Bissau and its partners. The discussion centred on the key recommendation concerning the establishment of a "partnership" between the Government and the donors.

4. This "partnership approach" was endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2003/1 of 30 January 2003, and subsequently advocated by the Group. Using this approach, the Group has generated momentum in favour of development assistance to Guinea-Bissau. As a result, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has created the emergency economic management fund recommended in the Group's report as an instrument for this partnership. At the same time, UNDP has set up a specific trust fund for assistance to the electoral process. Meanwhile, both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have remained engaged in Guinea-Bissau. Both institutions have dispatched missions to Guinea-Bissau that continue to assist in strengthening the capacity of the institutions of Government.

5. The Advisory Group has seen a growing working relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, through Ambassador Gaspar Martins, Chairman of the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which has led to the following concrete actions:

(a) On 5 March, the Security Council issued a press statement on Guinea-Bissau calling for political stability in that country;

(b) On 19 June, the President of the Security Council invited the Chairman of the Group to participate in a public meeting on Guinea-Bissau, at which the Secretary-General's report was discussed;

(c) The Security Council took a decision to invite the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau to undertake a joint mission to Guinea-Bissau, providing funding for the travel costs of the Chairman of the Advisory Group;

(d) In preparation for the joint mission to Guinea-Bissau, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa invited the Advisory Group and the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau to meet to plan the joint mission.

III. REPORT ON THE JOINT MISSION TO GUINEA-BISSAU, 26 TO 28 JUNE 2003

6. The terms of reference of the Security Council mission to Guinea-Bissau were to:

(a) Urge the Government and President Kumba Yala to ensure that the forthcoming elections are conducted in a transparent, fair and credible manner and to take the necessary confidence-building steps required of them;

(b) Urge the Government to endorse the partnership approach defined by the Advisory Group of the Economic and Social Council.

7. The objectives of the Advisory Group were to:

(a) Promote dialogue with the authorities of Guinea-Bissau;

(b) Appeal to the Government to take measures to prepare for the forthcoming elections;

(c) Promote better understanding between the authorities and donors;

(d) Address the humanitarian situation in the country.

8. The mission had a comprehensive briefing from the United Nations country team, including a representative of IMF and the United Nations Peace-Building Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS).

9. In addition, the mission held meetings with Mr. Kumba Yala, President of the Republic, Mr. Mario Antonio Avelino Reis Pires, Prime Minister, and a number of Ministers of his Government. The mission subsequently met with Mr. Augusto Sow, Minister of Economy and Finance, and General Vierissimo Saebra, Chief of the Armed Forces.

10. The mission also met with representatives of the political parties and with civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and religious leaders.

11. At these meetings, the joint mission learned that:

(a) There has been a deterioration of the political, economic and social situation in Guinea-Bissau since the previous visit of the Advisory Group. Guinea-Bissau has experienced a continuing decrease of its economic activities (-4.3 per cent in volume in 2002) following a brutal drop in its exports (-23.7 per cent in nominal value compared to 2001). The Government still owes salaries and wages, which are a considerable weight on the economy, and the accumulated arrears have led to dissatisfaction and strikes by civil servants. Guinea-Bissau has one of the lowest human development indices in the world (0.349, ranking 167 out of 173 countries);

(b) Among donors, there was a continued willingness to provide assistance to Guinea-Bissau. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) announced that it was focusing on child protection while continuing its programmes of nutritional health and basic education. The World Food Programme operates a school-feeding programme for more than 80,000 children. UNDP is providing assistance for the preparation of the country's poverty reduction strategy paper and has created a special trust fund to receive donations for the elections. The World Bank is completing a major public expenditure review and IMF is carrying out technical assistance missions to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which should help increase donor confidence in the functioning of the Ministry. On the bilateral side, the Government of Italy has announced that it will sign an interim debt relief agreement with Guinea-Bissau, cancelling a big portion of the bilateral debt of the country, and that it will take commitments to cancel the remaining part. The Government of Japan has donated more than 2,000 metric tons of rice to the country;

(c) Meanwhile, the electoral process is still in a deadlock. The President had earlier announced that the elections would be held on 6 July 2003. As a result, some technical support was provided by UNDP, including $500,000 for the registration of voters. The Government of Portugal donated electoral materials. The European Union pledged 1.2 million euros for electoral support.

12. However, during the joint Security Council-Advisory Group mission, it became clear that the authorities were not ready to hold elections in July 2003. President Kumba Yala assured the mission that the elections would be held in October 2003 and that the postponement would allow for the preparations that the United Nations said were needed if a credible election was to be held.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

13. The mission concluded that the holding of elections was an urgent priority. The absence of a legislative arm of Government is sorely missed in Guinea-Bissau.

14. In its presidential statement dated 19 June 2003 (S/PRST/2003/8), the Security Council appealed to the donor community to contribute financially to the implementation of the political and economic process in Guinea-Bissau, including necessary support for the legislative elections.

15. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau recommends that the Economic and Social Council further appeal to the donors to consider funding the elections through contributions to the UNDP Trust Fund, as a matter of priority. The holding of the elections will help to stabilize the political situation in Guinea-Bissau, which will allow increased attention to be focused on the socio-economic and humanitarian needs of that country. The longer Guinea-Bissau exists within the vacuum caused by the absence of an elected Parliament, the greater are the chances for this country to slide back into conflict, as the Advisory Group warned in its report to the Council of 10 January 2003.

Note

[1] The members of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau are Ambassador Dumisani S. Kumalo, Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations and Chairman of the Group; Ambassador Luzeria dos Santos Jaló, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau; Ambassador Ronaldo Mota Sardenberg, Permanent Representative of Brazil; Ambassador Gonçalo Aires de Santa Clara Gomes, Permanent Representative of Portugal; and Ambassador Dirk van den Berg, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, represented by Mr. Arjan Paul Hamburger, Deputy Permanent Representative.